

Message Text

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SUBJECT: VISIT OF AMBASSADOR STOESSEL AND PARTY TO SOYUZ 19

LAUNCH AT BAYKONUR, 15 JULY 1975

1. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, AMBASSADOR AND MRS. STOESSEL, NASA ASSOCIATE DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR WILLIS H. SHAPLEY, AND SCIENCE COUNSELOR LOEBNER WITNESSED SOYUZ 19 LAUNCH AT BAYKONUR ALONG WITH A DOZEN HIGH-RANKING SOVIET OFFICIALS. HOST TO AMBASSADOR'S PARTY WAS LT. GENERAL DMITRIY G. BOLSHAKOV, COMMANDER OF BAYKONUR BASE. MRS. BOLSHAKOV ACCOMPANIED MRS. STOESSEL THROUGHOUT THE DAY; ACADEMICIAN BORIS N. PETROV, PRESIDENT OF INTERKOSMOS ACCOMPANIED MR. SHAPLEY; AND LEV. A. NIKOLAYEV, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF BAYKONUR LAUNCHINGS, ACCOMPANIED SCICOUNSELOR LOEBNER. ALSO ALONG WERE TWO MFA OFFICIALS, COUNSELOR ANTIPOV AND FIRST SECRETARY CHURILLIN. COSMONAUTS WERE ALSO PRESENT - MAJOR GENERAL V.A. SHATALOV, LT. GENERAL G.T. BEREGOVY AND LT. GENERAL TITOV, THE OLDEST LIVING COSMONAUT AND GAGARIN'S STANDBY AND SECOND MAN IN SPACE.

2. DEPARTING FROM VNUKOVO 1 AT 0700 ON ITS OWN TU-134A JET (CAP. 60 PASS.) THE AMERICAN DELEGATION WAS ACCOMPANIED ONLY BY THE TWO ABOVE-MENTIONED MFA OFFICIALS. SKIRTING THE NORTHEAST SECTION OF THE ARAL SEA, THE JET JOURNEYED ON SCHEDULE (0950) TO THE LENINSK AIRPORT, BUT THERE WENT INTO HOLDING PATTERN AND LANDED SOME TWENTY MINUTES LATER. WITH THE BAYKONUR BASE

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DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE LANDING APPROACH, THE LAUNCHING

INSTALLATIONS WERE NOT VISIBLE FROM THE SIDE WINDOWS OF THE AIRCRAFT. ALREADY ON THE GROUND AT THE AIRPORT WERE A NUMBER OF SMALL AIRCRAFT AND THREE OTHER JETS. ONE OF THESE CARRIED A LARGE RED STAR ON ITS TAIL (PRESUMABLY THE AIRCRAFT OF ARMY GENERAL TOLUBKO, SEE PARA 5); THE OTHERS MAY WELL HAVE BROUGHT THE INTERKOSMOS OFFICIALS. AMONG THE GREETING PARTY WAS A GROUP OF PIONEER BOYS WHO PRESENTED FLOWERS TO ALL VISITORS.

3. THE FIVE-CAR CARAVAN, INCLUDING THE US-FLAG BEARING AMBASSADORIAL CAR DROVE FIVE TO TEN MINUTES TO LENINSK, A TOWN OF 60,000 SURROUNDED BY FENCE AND CLOSED TO SOVIET CITIZENS. WITH NO OTHER TRAFFIC AND FEW PEDESTRIANS AROUND, THE CARAVAN PASSED THROUGH GUARDED GATES AND STOPPED FOR A SHORT REST AND BRIEF BUT LAVISH LUNCH. THEN THE TOUR BEGAN. NINETY MINUTES PRIOR TO LAUNCH, AMBASSADOR AND MRS. STOESSEL SPOKE TO ALEKSEY LEONOV AND VALERIY KUBASOV THROUGH A GLASS PARTITION. THEY WISHED THEM WELL. LEONOV PRESENTED HIS ARM-MOUNTED MIRROR, WHICH ACCOMPANED HIM ON PAST MISSION TO MRS. STOESSEL. IT WAS CARRIED OUT OF THE ISOLATION CHAMBER AND PRESENTED TO HER.

4. THE USDEL THEN TOURED A NUMBER OF SITES WHICH COMMEMORATE RECENT HISTORICAL EVENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE AT BAYKONUR. TITOV POINTED OUT THAT HE WAS PRESENT WHEN FROM THE VERY SAME PAD GAGARIN WAS LAUNCHED INTO SPACE. THE SAME PAD WAS ALSO USED TO LAUNCH THE FIRST SPUTNIK IN 1957.

5. AFTER SUCCESSFUL AND PRECISELY-TIMED INSERTION OF SOYUZ 19 INTO ORBIT, USDEL WAS GREETED BY ARMY GENERAL VLADIMIR F. TOLUBKO, COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF USSR STRATEGIC ROCKET FORCES, TOGETHER WITH PROFESSOR K. BYSHUYEV WHO CAME FROM THE NEARBY CONTROL CENTER.

6. IN THE EVENING AMBASSADOR AND MRS. STOESSEL PLANTED A KARAGACH TREE IN THE ALLEY OF COSMONAUTS AND ASTRONAUTS. (FYI: THERE IS A CUSTOM FOR EACH COSMONAUT TO PLANT A TREE IN A ROW BEGUN BY GAGARIN. THE LAST TREES IN THE ROW WERE PLANTED BY THE VISITING AMERICAN ASTRONAUTS A FEW WEEKS AGO.) TREE PLANTING IS VERY IMPORTANT TO THE AREA WHICH IS ARID. KARAGACH IS A NATIVE TREE CAPABLE OF WITHSTANDING THE HARSH CLIMATE WHERE TEMPERATURES FLUCTUATE BETWEEN -50 DEGREES CENTIGRADE AND PLUS 40 DEGREES CENTIGRADE. ONLY INHABITED REGIONS HAVE GREENERY.

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7. THE US PARTY WAS TOLD THAT IT WAS THE ONLY NON-SOVIET DIRECT VIEWERS OF THE LAUNCH. NO OTHER VIEWING PARTIES WERE VISIBLE AT ANY TIME. THE ONLY OTHER OBSERVERS WERE WORKERS WHO MANNED THE ADJACENT CONTROL CENTER.

8. THE ENTIRE VICINITY WAS REMARKABLY EMPTY OF PEOPLE EXCEPT THAT IMMEDIATELY AFTER SOYUZ 19 WAS INSERTED INTO ORBIT SOME 50-80

PEOPLE EMERGED FROM A PARTIALLY UNDERGROUND STRUCTURE ADJACENT TO THE VIEWING STAND. THE US PARTY VIEWED THE LAUNCH A DISTANCE OF 800M FROM THE ROCKET PAD. IN THE FAR DISTANCE TWO OTHER SPACE VEHICLES READY FOR LAUNCH COULD BE SEEN. THE PARTY WAS TOLD THAT THESE BELONG TO "OTHER PROJECTS". THE STANDBY SOYUZ 20 WAS NOT VISIBLE.

9. THE PARTY WAS FOLLOWED EVERYWHERE BY FOUR STILL PHOTOGRAPHERS, BUT WAS NOT AWARE OF LIVE TV COVERAGE, EXCEPT WHEN TALKING TO THE READY-TO-BOARD CREW. THE US DELEGATION WAS NOT PERMITTED TO TAKE PICTURES.

10. THE AMBASSADORIAL PARTY COULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN BETTER TREATED BY THE SOVIET HOSTS. FOOD AND DRINK WERE OVERABUNDANT. THE VISIT WAS METICULOUSLY PLANNED AND IMPLEMENTED AND WAS TO THE SAME LOCATIONS PREVIOUSLY VISITED LAST APRIL AND MAY BY TWO NASA DELEGATIONS.

11. THREE ADDITIONAL NOTEWORTHY POINTS: FIRST, THE TECHNICAL AREA IN THE ASSEMBLY BUILDING, WHERE DOOR NAME TAGS OF MAY NASA DELEGATION REMAINED IN PLACE, WAS COMPLETELY DEVOID OF INSTRUMENTATION; SECOND, BOTH PARTY AND HOSTS WERE TAKEN REMARKABLY CLOSE, WITHIN 50 YARDS, OF THE FUELED LAUNCH VEHICLE ABOUT ONE HOUR PRIOR TO LAUNCH; THIRD, EXTREMELY FEW PEOPLE WERE VISIBLE IN LENINSK AS WELL AS AT THE TECHNICAL AREAS.

STOESSEL

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